

1361
S. A. 200.
A
1059
S E R M O N
O N
M A R R I A G E,

Preached at
BLACK-FR Y E R S,
March 17, 173 $\frac{3}{4}$

By *SAMUEL WRIGHT, D.D.*



L O N D O N.

Printed for E M A N. M A T T H E W S and
D. F A R M E R, at the *Bible* in *Pater-noster-*
Row; and R. H E T T, at the *Bible* and *Crown*,
in the *Poultry*.

M.DCC.XXXIV.

2-A 200

STERN

OF

MARRIAGE

in London

WEDDING



WEDDING

LONDON

THE MARRIAGE OFFICE
GENERAL REGISTRY OFFICE
ST. MARTIN'S LANE
LONDON, W.C.2

A
S E R M O N
O N
M A R R I A G E.

LUKE XX. 34, 35.

“ Jesus answering said unto them,
“ The Children of this World
“ marry and are given in mar-
“ riage. But they which shall
“ be accounted worthy to obtain
“ that World, and the resurrec-
“ tion from the dead, neither
“ marry nor are given in mar-
“ riage.”

THE Nuptials celebrated this Week,
in a manner so magnificent and suit-
able to the great and good occasion,
and that have spread an universal and uncom-
mon joy through this City among all ranks
and degrees of Men, have drawn such atten-
tion, and are become so much the Subject
of Conversation, that I apprehend your
thoughts will hardly be kept from one or
A 2 other

other turn that way during the religious Services of this Day. It may therefore be of some advantage to fall in with them, in order to raise your minds and hopes to that more perfect State of things, in which there shall be no more marrying or giving in marriage.

The trifling and jesting humour that prevails in talking of this Subject, I believe has often prov'd the reason of keeping it out of religious Discourses: And yet there is no one thing in the World, by which religion is more affected, either to the advantage or disadvantage of it, than by this. Nor is there any affair in life upon which the happiness or unhappiness of men more depends than this. I hope therefore you will allow and approve my taking the present favourable opportunity to treat of it.

The place of Scripture now read, is a part of our Saviour's answer to a captious and ensnaring Question put to him by some of the *Sadducees*, who denied a Resurrection. They urge the case of a woman who had several husbands, and desire to know of our Lord, " Whose wife she should be accounted at the resurrection of the dead?" To this our Blessed Saviour replies, *that the children of this world marry and are given in marriage*; allowing it as the constitution and appointment of God, and very suitable to the present dying state of creatures

tures here on earth. But when they imagin'd that the Kingdom of glory after the resurrection, would in this resemble the Kingdoms of this world, Christ tells them that *they erred*, not knowing the *Scriptures* nor the *power* of GOD. For when these bodies which are now mortal, shall put on immortality, and when that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body, we shall live and act in a quite different manner to what we now do, and our happiness shall be of a quite different kind. As They can die no more who are raised to that future life, so there will be no need to provide for continual births; they shall be *equal to the angels* in their *duration*.

They are no longer look'd upon as the children of mortal men, but as the children of GOD, being the children of the Resurrection. And perhaps it is not *only* meant, that they are then equal to the angels in *duration*; but in their having GOD himself, immediately and by his almighty power, to be the *Father* and Author of the new life they shall then receive. In this the children of the Resurrection equal the angels, who do not derive their beings from one another as the children of this world do. For every one shall equally receive his new being from GOD in the next world, and so shall be his children as *Adam* was the son of GOD, formed and raised purely by the agency

gency and power of GOD himself. For these reasons, they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain *that world*, and the *resurrection* from the dead, *neither marry nor are given in marriage*.

In these two verses therefore, that are to be further enlarged on, we are led to consider the two different states of men, while mortal, and when they become immortal.

I. The state of the *Children of this world*, in their *marrying* and *giving in marriage*.

II. The state of those who shall obtain the *perfection* and *happiness* of the *next world*, in their *marrying no more*.

The difference of times is a matter of great importance in considering this Subject. For otherwise we may be led to think and act very unsuitably to our present circumstances, and the Laws of GOD in *this world*, as *popery* leadeth great numbers of people to do. Or else we may go into very unbecoming sentiments of the happiness of the *world to come*, and the manner of our existence there, which is one mark of the Imposture of *Mahomet*. And as much hurt may be done to religion both ways, so the credit and honour of it may be greatly promoted by forming right thoughts of the difference there is, between the state that now is, and that which is to come.

I. Let us therefore attend a while to the state of the *children of this world*; concerning whom our text says, they *marry and are given in marriage*. Our Saviour does not mention this with any marks of contempt, or flight; nor, as any way unfitting us for the happiness and glory of the angelic world; but only teaches us to restrain our thoughts of it to this present life, with respect to the *special relations* which hereby we are brought into, and the *duties* that arise from such relations.

Vice and folly have thrown much disgrace upon a married state, and carried multitudes into divers lusts and passions that utterly disappoint and overthrow the great ends and designs of it. And in many cases, for want of care to marry religiously, or *in the Lord* as the phrase of Scripture is, and to fix agreeably as to persons and circumstances, and upon the foundation of a mutual affection, great unhappiness is frequently occasion'd in this state; and life is spent in fruitless wishes, by many amongst us, that they had never enter'd into such bonds. But marriage is nevertheless to be honoured as an institution of GOD; and as that which makes a great part of the business of this world; and from which, many of the pleasures and much of the happiness of this life arise, as well

well as the cares of it: Our Blessed Saviour himself hath done great honour to this Institution: And the *forbidding to marry* is called in the apostolical writings the doctrine of *Demons*.

To speak of these particulars each of them distinctly.

I. The marriage of the children of this world is the *Institution of God*. It was appointed for society, and posterity in the state of innocence it self, and for remedy after sin entred into the world.

The first happy pair were formed for the most agreeable Society with each other, to be mutual helps and blessings; and they had every perfection both of mind and body that rendered them, with the other works of God upon a review of them, *very good*. Their minds were *pure*, bearing a resemblance of the Deity in all moral perfection; and they were made *one*, by the secret and powerful direction of almighty love. Their bodies probably were clothed with a *Lustre* that distinguished them from all the other creatures of this earth. Every other creature had its respective clothing of various-colour'd Hair, Furs, Wool, or Feathers. But the covering of the human Pair was *light*; a glory surrounding their bodies, as the Body of Christ shone upon mount *Tabor*; thus resembling their maker, who himself is *clothed*
with

with light as with a *garment*. And they were placed in a garden of pleasure and plenty, commonly call'd a *Paradise*.

This beautiful Couple, so perfectly amiable in the eyes of each other, were not only partners in the joys of innocence, but they sinn'd and suffered together too. Being in honour, they understood it not ; but by a vain ambition to raise themselves out of God's time and in a direct breach of his command, they fell from the happiness in which they were created, and became subject to Death, even as the *beasts* that *perish*. Thus having lost their moral perfection, and the resemblance of God in their minds, the *light* which shone round their bodies departed from them, and thereupon they beheld *their nakedness* with shame and confusion.

They then lost *that glory*, which could never since be supplied by any of the ornaments borrowed from this earth. The glory of Princes in all their richest attire, and a King's Daughter, tho' adorned with Gems and clothed in wrought gold, are but so many costly and fanciful coverings of that nakedness which was occasioned by sinning against God. Here we may justly lament a loss which nothing in this world can make amends for. "Wo unto us that we have
"sinned."

B

But

But yet the loss of native innocence, and heavenly lustre, does not make void the institution of marriage. It still continues the same in all the obligations of it, and still receives blessing from God. To avoid fornication the apostolical direction is, "Let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband*." In thus keeping to the first institution, the Scripture declares that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge†." It is, therefore, an abiding and continuing institution of God, That the children of *this world* should marry and be given in marriage. This is still requisite for the sake of mutual *Society*; for the regular forming and educating of *Children*; and to prevent lewdness and *whoredom*. These Vices are the very bane of *Society*, and of *Posterity*; the ruin of men's understandings, and the occasions of violent passions and perpetual evil surmises and jealousies, and of great idleness and almost of every other Vice. They have always thrown things into confusion, and have brought ruin and desolation upon a people as soon as they have become generally corrupted and abandoned to their Lusts. But to proceed,

* 1 Cor. vii. 2.

† Heb. xiii. 4.

2. The marriage of the children of this world, is that which makes a *great part of the business* of the world.

How many are the ways of mens employing themselves, and how various are the studies, and labours, and methods of commerce, to which they give up themselves that they may raise and provide for families.

Amidst all the disgraces cast upon marriage by the prophaneness and licentiousness of the times, yet those very creatures, many of them, that are now possess'd of estates which enable them to live in idleness and sinfull pleasures, owe their inheritances and their wealth to the marriages of parents and ancestors; whose care of their education, and making such plentiful provisions for them, was the fruit and effect of orderly life and fidelity to marriage-covenants.

It is further to be observed, that many others who have become wealthy by their own labour, and the blessing of God upon them, yet have been first formed for regular life in some orderly families; or else they have put themselves forward in hope of having comfortable families of their own: So that one way or other, the great Spring of business, and the careful diligent management of it, have been owing to the Institution of marriage, and the laws or prospects of it.

Add to this, that the publick solemnizing of marriages with a prudent regard to circumstances,

cumstances, serves to promote many kinds of business; and to kindle and cherish more good dispositions in general, than secret and concealed matches can do. The common Effect of these last is penury and narrow life, or indulging such a fondness for *one*, as shall make breaches with others, and so produce great disorders instead of exciting general affections. Publicly owned and avowed marriages give the world much better notions of decorum, and order, and of the mutual and joyfull consent of all parties concerned, than hidden and private attachments do. Our Blessed Saviour represents the great business of religion it self, by comparing the *Kingdom of heaven* to a certain king, which made a *marriage for his son*. Matth. xxii. 2.

3. From the marriage of the children of this world, ariseth much of the *pleasure* and *happiness* of *this life*, as well as the business of it.

What is there in all present gains and possessions, or in honours and high stations, that would make life of any esteem and value with some men, were it not for their family-enjoyments? How much doth it ease under trouble, to have a prudent and faithfull Partner of it? and how much doth it increase our comforts and blessings, to have others daily sharing in them, and owning their obligations,

ligations, and returning them in many grateful expressions and kind offices?

It is indeed too plain to be denied, that the happiness of life is destroyed in many families, by idleness, intemperance, violent passions, ingratitude, perverseness, or by a love of pleasures *abroad*, more than of God and of *home*. But all these cases notwithstanding, there is a happiness that ariseth from order, good agreement, and the pleasure which some families and relations have in one another, that serves in every age sufficiently to recommend the state of marriage in general. There is in many a thankfulness excited to the wise Institutor of it, as greatly lessening their burdens and cares; or at least softning them, and making Life easy under them, if they are increased.

To this institution of God, the children of Men owe some of their most *beneficial* and *useful* alliances. The interests of whole bodies and societies, and even of whole nations and kingdoms are hereby united, to the mutual strengthening of one another against common enemies, as well as the securing of a free and profitable commerce, and intercourses of continual friendships among themselves.

This, I hope in God, will be the consequence of the first Princess in the present royal family being united to the House of *Orange*. What may we not Expect from

a Prince of such good Dispositions, and uncommon attainments, and who has already gained such a general, may I not say universal esteem and affection?

But leaving others, to whom it more specially belongs, to enlarge on that subject, I proceed to what may be observed in private life.

How many owe their business, their estates, their rise in the world, to one or other incident in marriage; or to some branches of acquaintance, that are owing to such alliances? To some indeed great trials and disadvantages, of one kind or other, may arise from the families into which they marry. But they were so placed perhaps by a wise providence, for the Rise and the Good of others; and on this account they may have their reward some other way from God, when they have no expectation from those whom they have been instrumental to bring into those very stations in life, from whence all their prosperity hath flow'd.

4. The marriage of the children of this world hath *an honour* put upon it by our Blessed SAVIOUR himself.

Tho' his undertaking and office, as mediator and redeemer of our race, would not admit of his entering into a married state; nor would it have suited his *sinless* nature, to become one with any *sinful* creature; those that
were

were to be accounted to him for a generation, must not be born after the flesh, but after the working of the Spirit of grace and holiness; yet he shewed a marvellous regard to the Law of marriage, in abiding with his parents, and being subject to them tho' very poor and low in the world, till he came to be about 30 years old.

It is further observable, that when he entered upon his publick work, the *first miracle* that he wrought was, the furnishing a very large quantity of the most excellent wine, at a marriage feast. "There was a marriage in *Cana of Galilee*, and the mother of Jesus was there, and both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage. *"

Happy that marriage where the presence of JESUS is sought, and granted.

You may read the account of the miracle from the 3^d to the 11th V. of that 11^d of *John*; where it is said "This beginning of miracles did JESUS in *Cana of Galilee*, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." The miracle was so noted, so publickly own'd and attested, and there was so much benevolence and goodness in it, that his disciples were thoroughly engaged to him from that time. He that was pleased at that marriage to turn Water into Wine, can upon the like occasions, add the richest blessings to the poorest accommo-

* John. ii. 1, 2.

dations;

dations ; and when outward supplies fail, he can renew them ; and when the Spirits sink, he can revive the joy.

Yea, our Blessed SAVIOUR honours the institution of marriage so far, as to compare his own future *coming in glory* to the coming of a *Bridegroom*. Who will receive those that are his by unfeigned faith and covenant surrenders, and whose Lamps are burning, to partake of his glory and his kingdom ; or, as the parable expresth it, to “ go in “ with him to the marriage *.”

5. The marriage of the children of this world is not only allowed and approved by christianity, but the *forbidding of it* is called in the *apostolical* Writings the *doctrine of Demons*†. “ The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of Devils ; speaking lyes in hypocrisy [till they are hardened in them] and their conscience is like a thing *seared with a hot iron*. “ Forbidding to marry, &c.”

Whether this be applied to the *Essenes* amongst the Jews, and to the Jewish teachers of christianity, that upon higher pretences to sanctity and religion than others, required abstinence from *marriage*, and from various kinds of *meats* : Or whether it be soter told by

* Matth. xxv. beg.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

the spirit of prophecy concerning the times of *Antichrist*, that men should sadly depart from the faith of the gospel, and be carried away by seducing spirits and diabolical doctrines, speaking lyes under an hypocritical pretence of still holding the christian faith and profession: Whether it refer to one, or both of these, it is equally condemned in all them that teach or require a total abstinence from marriage, and from several sorts of meats, as being a Doctrine of Devils. For it is there pleaded, GOD has created them to be *received with thanksgiving*, of them that believe his word, and know the truth as it is in Jesus. The contrary doctrines are not of GOD, who is the Author of the Law of Nature, as well as of Revelation. They are evidently the contrivance of some adverse power and policy, to ensnare men and throw them into divers lusts: or to carry them on under divers forms of hypocrisy and deceit, to the disgrace of revealed religion, and to the final destruction of their own souls.

Christianity alloweth that the present state is a conjugal state; the future, is an angelical state: And whoever, without the spirit of GOD and some extraordinary impressions and power from on high, shall neglect things humane, and the affairs of this present life, upon pretence of attaining to angelical perfection, falls into the snare of the Devil. St. *Paul* therefore speaks with great

C

caution

caution upon this head. When he recommends a single life on account of its being freest from worldly *cares*, and having great advantages for *serving* the LORD; and determines it to be certainly best in times of *persecution*, wherein men were called to sacrifice every thing for Christ; yet even with these views, and in these circumstances, he would not *absolutely forbid* marriage, lest he should bring any *into a snare*, and give the tempter an advantage against them by so doing. Our Blessed LORD himself goes no further in his first instructions, when he was speaking to those that were to travel from place to place to publish his Gospel, but only to say, "He that can receive it, to abstain from marriage for the kingdom of heaven's sake, let him receive it."

It is never once pleaded that men should vow perpetual celibacy, in order to their living the life of angels, and arriving at a state of perfection like theirs in all spiritual Exercises, while we are in these bodies: But only, from the consideration of some *present necessity*, in the situation of affairs on this Earth.

It is required and with the highest reason, "That such as believe should not be *unequally yoked* with unbelievers;" because, such can have no delightful communion with one another, nor can the order of families be well maintain'd. And innumerable are the
present

present mischiefs, and disorders in private life that have arisen from a neglect of this rule. But that being taken care of, the gospel doth not restrain any sort of men, on account of their condition in the world, be it higher or lower, from entering into a family state.

The *popish* doctrine, therefore, of forbidding to marry, and sending multitudes of both sexes into *monasteries* and *nunneries*, upon pretence of angelic purity and devotion, is an ensnaring, unchristian, and diabolical doctrine: Confounding the *present* state with that which is to *come*, and making people break off from relative duties upon every chagrin and disappointment; and thus overthrowing the laws of society and of nature, upon a false representation of reveal'd religion, and the power of the *Pope* to make rules and orders for such useless devotionalists. But we may now dismiss the first part of the text, The children of this world marry and are given in marriage.

II. Let us next raise our thoughts to the *perfection* and *happiness* of those that shall be *counted worthy to obtain that world which is to come*, and the redemption or *resurrection of the body*, that shall render them fit for it. "They neither marry nor
" are given in marriage." Here it greatly

concerns us to understand, What it is to be *counted worthy* to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead; and then the *state* of those who do obtain it, that they have no more to do with marriage.

I. Let us consider what it is to be *counted worthy* to *obtain that world*, and the *resurrection from the dead*. Now this worthiness consists, In our alliance to the SON of GOD, and being made *Heirs* with him: In our having an inward agreeableness, and a *suitableness* to the honour and felicity he shall confer upon us: And in the *Redemption* of our *bodies* from the grave, and their being made capable of inhabiting that world to which they shall be raised.

(1.) They that are counted worthy to obtain that world, must be admitted on account of their *relation* to the SON of GOD, and being made *Heirs with him*.

We are said to be "Heirs of GOD, and *Joint-heirs* with Christ*." There can be no pretence of Worthiness, or claim of merit on our part, but as Christ claims for us on account of our relation to him as members of his church. We are brought into this relation by faith, and by covenant-surrenders of our selves to him, and thro' sanctification of the

* Rom. viii. 17.

spirit *. The glory which CHRIST has acquired, is not only for himself, but to be communicated and imparted to his church, when the number of its members is compleat and full.

As the dignity, treasures, and felicity of the Husband, reflect an honour, and communicate a happiness to the Wife; so the scriptures represent our future worthiness, and excellency, and glory as arising from our espousals unto Christ. Under the character of an *Husband* †, he is said to “ love
 “ the church, and to give himself for it,
 “ that he might sanctify and cleanse it
 “ with the washing of water, by the word;
 “ that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle
 “ or any such thing, but that it should be holy
 “ and without blemish.” Hence we find, in the book of the *Revelation*, this very similitude is used to excite our joy and praise. “ Let us be glad and rejoice and
 “ give honour to him, (*i. e.* to the Lord
 “ God omnipotent) for the marriage of the
 “ Lamb is come, and his Wife hath made
 “ herself ready: And to her was granted
 “ that she should be array’d in fine linnen,
 “ pure and white; for the fine linnen is
 “ the righteousness of the saints.”

She, on her part, is said to make herself ready, in obtaining *that* righteousness, that Christ gave himself on purpose to engage

* 2 Thes. ii. 13, 14.

† Eph. v. 25, to 29.

and bring her to. And he said " Write; " blessed are they which are called to the " marriage supper of the Lamb*. And he " saith unto me these are the *true sayings* of " GOD." Blessed are they that shall see how perfectly, and blisfully, all preparations *will answer*, when that heavenly marriage shall be celebrated. But let it be considered distinctly in the next place,

(2.) That they who are counted *worthy* to obtain *that world*, must have an *inward suitableness* to the *honour* and *felicity* conferr'd on them.

Persons that are *unsuitable*, and quite disagreeable to each other, may enter into the nearest relations here on earth, thro' some mistaken Views of *their own*, or some managements of *others*: But Christ will admit of no such *disagreeable alliances* in the blessed state above; nothing that would defile, or destroy the purity, nothing that shall interrupt the harmony and joy, of those that are to live for ever with him, shall enter into his kingdom. If it be thought a Hell upon earth to spend *a life* with them that are utterly disagreeable, what would it be to spend *an eternity* with such? Unless therefore we have a *suitableness* to Christ, *i. e.* the same mind in us that was also in him, and the same delights and joys and graces with him, he will not *count us wor-*

* Rev. xix. 7, 8, 9.

thy to live for ever where he is: nor indeed could we our selves bear his continual presence, without such a conformity to him.

The Greek word used in our *text* denotes such a worthiness as this: A worthiness of congruity*, or a meetness for the high station and happy alliance into which we are brought. For this it is that “*St. Paul* gives “ thanks to the father who had made him “ and his *Colossians* meet to be partakers of “ the inheritance of the Saints in light †”.

O what a number of loose disagreeable creatures to Christ, now talk of their hoping to be saved by him, and with a most amazing confidence think to obtain that world where he is, without ever considering that none shall come there but such as are counted worthy or fit to have their abode with him!

The Door will be *shut* against the unprepared and *foolish* Virgins, notwithstanding their crying *Lord, Lord, open to us* ‡. Those that are counted worthy, and those also that are unworthy to obtain that world, are described distinctly in that *Parable* of the *ten Virgins* going forth to *meet the Bridegroom*, alluding to the manner of the Jewish marriages in our Saviour's time.

(3.) They that are counted worthy to obtain that world, shall obtain also the re-

* Καταξιωθέντες.

† Coloss. i. 12.

‡ Math. xxv. 10, 11.

demption

demption of their bodies from the grave, and so shall be render'd capable of inhabiting the heavenly regions.

When our text speaks only in general of the resurrection from the dead, we are to understand it of the resurrection of such, as are *counted worthy* to obtain that kingdom prepared for the redeemed of Christ, from the foundation of the world. Concerning These the Apostle says, that having the first-fruits of the spirit, the beginnings of the heavenly life and blessedness, they groan within themselves for the salvation expected from the body of sin and death. Mind the expression there*, “waiting for the Adoption, the redemption of our body.” Waiting for that new way of becoming the children of God, and being received into the blissful part of his family, by the redemption of our body from the power of the grave.

This our Saviour himself mentions, to excite the joy and hope of his disciples, when he shall come in a very awfull manner with power and great glory to judge the world. “Then (says he) lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh†”. Your bodies shall be rescued from the dominion of Death; and that they may be fitted to match with the Redeemer, and inhabit that world where his Kingdom is, they shall be

* Rom. viii. 23.

† Luke. xxi. 28.

changed

changed from being *vile* and *corruptible* bodies, to be *spiritual* and *immortal* bodies, “ being “ fashioned like the glorious body of Christ “ himself, * according to the working where- “ by he is able to subdue all things unto “ himself.” Those parts of the body that are only suited to this animal and dying state, shall be no more ; because there shall be no more death. But the senses, and all essential parts of the human body, shall be in the greatest perfection, suited to the employments and felicity of the heavenly world.

There shall indeed be a resurrection of the bodies of the *wicked*, as well as the righteous. For in this matter our Saviour speaks most assuredly, and plainly. “ The hour is coming “ in which all that are in their graves shall hear “ his voice and shall come forth ; They that “ have done good unto the resurrection of life, “ and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation †.” But the bodies of those being raised again, that have done evil, will only be to witness against one another in the day of judgement ; and to receive the due reward of their deeds, by the punishment and torment of that body that has done wickedly, as well as the self-reproaches and agonies of the Soul. Then all the *vile lusts* by which wicked people have dishonoured their bodies, and disgraced the constitution of GOD in the present

* Phil. iii. 21.

† John v. 28, 29.

life, shall be exposed in a manner that shall render them detestable to themselves and to the whole creation of GOD, and endless tormentors of one another.

But the resurrection from the dead which shall be granted to them who are counted worthy to obtain that world, and the life of angels, will be a perfect and complete redemption from all the troublesome appetites of the body, and from all its diseases: From the blemishes, and pains, the corruptions, and temptations, to which bodies here on earth are subject. And it will be a redemption from the reproaches and the scorn of the wicked, from the wiles of the devil, and in short from every disagreeable thing both in *themselves* and in those that are made their happy *companions*. Wisdom and Love will be in perfection, without the interruption and disturbance of earthly inclinations, wants, and passions; and without fear of our joys ever decreasing, or being taken from us. This leads us to the other head.

2. We should endeavour to think aright on the *state of those* who obtain that world, in that account our text gives of it, that they *neither marry nor are given in marriage*.

A contemplation, this, that can give no just ground of *uneasiness* to those who now account themselves most *happy* in a married life;
tho'

tho' it will probably afford *greater comfort*, and *pleasure*, to those who are at present *unhappy*. The thoughts of the unhappy turn, with a more quick and lively sense of things, to the peace and rest and enjoyments of that world where marriage is no more. And thus they have one way of being happy in which they may exceed others, that is raising their hearts and affections more to heaven, by being disappointed here on earth.

But to turn the other way, the happiest Pair that live, with all the blessings of a married state about them, may greatly *improve* their felicity, by looking to that world where *minds* will be more agreeable to one another, than they can be in this imperfect state: And where *bodies* will be beautifull and glorious, without blemish, and out of the reach of death. Look, and say, what it is that gives you the truest and most lasting satisfaction in one another; and then think, how much all will be outdone in the world to come.

Are the entertainments of the understanding, or the endearments of affection, your delight? Both these will be unspeakably greater in heaven, than they can be on earth. There you will be exceeding happy, both in knowledge, and love. Primarily in the love of GOD, and then in a seraphick love of one another. And as the sun-beams will put out a fire upon this earth; so when the full-grown glory of heaven shall shine upon our souls, all present earthly

fires must needs go out, and be extinguished for ever: And that, certainly, without any unhappiness or disturbance.

Beside ; you shall be then perfectly freed from *all the cares* that attend a married state. Cares in providing for a family ; cares in guarding against evils and losses ; cares arising from many unavoidable afflictions, and from many errors or disgusts that happen in the conduct of life. Where the greatest endearment is, there your troubles and pains are doubly piercing. Both feel what each endures, by a perpetual Sympathy ; and where the Union is most intimate and wise, the more shocking are the views of a separation. The more grievous are the death of children, where the souls of both parents centred ; or what is worse than their death, the more heart breaking is their disobedience, and utter ruin of themselves. Add to all this, that the uneasiness of having slothful, or wicked, or perverse and disorderly servants will be there no more.

What disturbance then can it give us, to think of a state where marriage shall be no more, with all its cares, and with all its sins and troubles ; but where all the rational and solid pleasures of it, will be unspeakably heightened and increased.

It may be asked by such as are now fond of each other, may we have the pleasure of hoping that those who are happy in their *relation to one another at present*, will be also
companions

companions in the *happiness* of *that world that is to come*? To this I answer; not merely on account of the relation in which they stand to one another here: For the Scripture expressly declares, That is dissolved by Death. It is so dissolved, that a *new relation* is commonly contracted in this World, notwithstanding a *great affection* that persons profess'd to have for one another before Death made a separation. And therefore every thing may well be altered in the other world, when both sides are changed, and bodies intirely dissolved and formed anew for quite different circumstances at the resurrection of the dead. The woman that was married to *several husbands*, shall be considered under the relation of a *wife* to neither one nor the other. This our Saviour declares in the context.

Nevertheless there is a pleasure that may be indulged, by those that are the means of Converting others, and that walk together as *Heirs of the Grace of life*, so that their *prayers* are not hindred in this world, such may comfortably Expect their *praises* shall be perfected together in the next world. If there has been a care of doing the will of God together, and a serviceableness to promote the *same* dispositions in each other that shall render both happy in heaven, and that shall suit them to *one* and the *same* mansion; there is very good reason to believe they *shall meet* at the resurrection of the just. And thus meeting, they shall be an everlasting joy to each other, on that very foot upon
which

which all relation is founded in the Kingdom of Christ. "He that doth the will of my father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Some that have been married in this world, will be as far distant from one another in that world to come, as Heaven is from Hell. And others may be as far distant as the lower, and higher mansions in heaven, can set them. For our Saviour says, "In his father's house are *many mansions*;" and all that are saved will then be placed in *that* mansion to which they are *suited*, and which is prepared for them.

We know that those who are instrumental to save others, and to make them meet for heaven, shall have such to be with them as their *joy and their crown* *. But many may be of the same congregation now, that shall not belong to the same mansion in heaven: And so it may be with members of families, as well as churches and religious societies. However this we are sure of, that those dispositions of soul which are truly good, and form us for happiness in the relations in which GOD sets us in this world, and that render us pleasing in his sight thro' a Redeemer, will render still happy when we shall be as the Angels of GOD.

From the whole, therefore, we should learn these two great lessons: *First*, to conduct ourselves as GOD requires we should do in our pre-

* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

sent condition, and in those stations and circumstances which by an all-disposing providence we are led into. Not slighting providence, nor thro' vanity or thoughtlessness, despising any thing that has a favourable aspect towards us; nor yet thinking to force our way, without providence, into any state of life; nor breaking off from any relation in which God hath set us, or quarrelling with providence for those Tryals we may meet with in it. But endeavouring to act as becomes those that profess obedience to the will of our heavenly Father; and as those that would not be unthankfull for the mercies we have, tho' we should not have all that we desire.

The *next* lesson is, to make it our concern in every state of life to prepare for the life to come. That we may be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, by entring into and abiding in a *covenant relation* to Christ, in whom we have redemption, and a right to the inheritance of the saints in light thro' faith in his name: And then, by getting more and more of an *agreeableness* to him, and *meetness* for that inheritance, by following after peace and holiness, without which none shall see the Lord: And finally, by looking for the redemption of these bodies from sin, and the grave, with an earnest and growing expectation.

To

To conclude; We should raise our hearts by all that is now suitable and pleasing to us, to the higher pleasures and satisfactions that heaven will afford. And we should comfort ourselves, under all that now grieves and afflicts us, by the thought of being shortly raised above all the necessities, and disorders of this present life. Then we shall get above all the wounds, and stabs that this earth gives us, both by mistaken affections, and mortal enmities.

To the great God and our Saviour be dominion and glory for ever. Amen.

7 JU 66

F I N I S.



